

Message Text

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TAGS: ENGR, TECH, UK

SUBJECT: FORMER HMG CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER ANNOUNCES
AGAINST LWR'S

REF: LONDON 1069

1. SIR ALAN COTTRELL, A WELL-KNOWN METALLURGIST, FORMER CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER TO HMG AND NOW MASTER OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, HAS FOLLOWED UP HIS EXPRESSION OF RESERVATIONS ABOUT LWR PRESSURE VESSEL INTEGRITY TO THE COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (REFTEL) WITH A LETTER TO THE FINANCIAL TIMES PUBLISHED ON JUNE 7. IN THAT LETTER COTTRELL NOTES THAT PRESSURE-TUBE REACTOR SYSTEMS SUCH AS CANDU AND STEAM GENERATING HEAVY-WATER UNITS HAVE AS AN ADVANTAGE OVER LWR'S THE "INTRINSIC FAIL-SAFE FEATURE" OF TUBE LEAKS THAT WOULD OCCUR BEFORE RUPTURE BECAUSE OF LOWER PRESSURES. "THE SECURITY OF AN LWR VESSEL, "HE STATES," MUST THEN DEPEND ON THE MAINTENANCE OF AN IMMACULATE STANDARD OF MANUFACTURE AND QUALITY CONTROL" AND ON RIGOROUS AND UNCLASSIFIED

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DETAILED INSPECTION.

2. LINKED WITH A FAIRLY OBVIOUS, ALTHOUGH NOT EXPLICIT, REFERENCE TO THE RECENT FLIXBOROUGH CHEMICAL PLANT EXPLOSION, COTTRELL COMMENTS THAT HE HOPES PUBLIC SAFETY IN THE UK WILL NEVER BECOME "DEPENDENT UPON ALMOST SUPERHUMAN ENGINEERING AND OPERATIONAL QUALITIES" AND EXPRESSES THE HOPE THAT HMG WILL CHOOSE A "SYSTEM LESS CRITICALLY DEPENDENT ON HUMAN PERFECTION THAN THE STEEL PRESSURE-VESSEL WATER REACTOR."

3. WE ARE UNABLE TO GAUGE WITH ANY CERTAINTY HOW MUCH INFLUENCE COTTRELL'S VIEWS WILL HAVE ON CURRENT HMG DECISION MAKERS. THE FT PUBLISHED A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE ON HIS LETTER IN THE SAME JUNE 7 ISSUE BY SCIENCE EDITOR DAVID FISHLOCK WHICH INDICATES THAT THE TIMING ON A REACTOR SYSTEM CHOICE MAY HAVE SLIPPED YET AGAIN. FISHLOCK, WHO HIMSELF HAS NOT BEEN EXACTLY A PROPONENT OF LWR'S, NOTES THAT HMG IS NOT EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE ITS DECISION UNTIL PERHAPS THE END OF JUNE, THAT IS, AFTER PUBLIC HEARINGS ARE HELD ON THE NEXT NUCLEAR POWER SITE AT TORNESS, SCOTLAND. (NOTE: TORNESS IS A SITE OF THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND BOARD, WHICH HAS EXPRESSED A PREFERENCE FOR SGHWR INSTALLATIONS). HE ADDS THAT HMG HAS GIVEN THE CENTRAL ELECTRICITY GENERATING BOARD PERMISSION TO PROCEED WITH FOSSIL-FUELED STATIONS AND ALSO HAS SCALED DOWN THE CEGB'S ELECTRICITY DEMAND ESTIMATES THROUGH THE EARLY 1980'S, THUS POSSIBLY ALLOWING HMG TO TAKE THE POSITION THAT A CRASH PROGRAM IMPORTANTLY INVOLVING LWR'S IS NOT NECESSARY AFTER ALL.

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